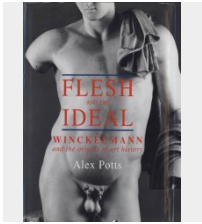


CHAPTER

## VII. Afterlife

Alex Potts



### FROM THE BOOK

#### [Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History](#)

### DESCRIPTION

Among many ways in which I might have defined the historical afterlife of Winckelmann's work, I have deliberately singled out two very loaded engagements with his image of the Greek ideal, the first connected with the politics of the 1789 French Revolution and the second with late nineteenth-century aestheticism and definitions of homosexual identity. In each instance, a distinctive combination of historical circumstances made Winckelmann's conception of Greek art particularly compelling as the ...

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## VII. Afterlife

### Jacobin Politics and Victorian Aestheticism

Among many ways in which I might have defined the historical afterlife of Winckelmann's work, I have deliberately singled out two very loaded engagements with his image of the Greek ideal, the first connected with the politics of the 1789 French Revolution and the second with late nineteenth-century aestheticism and definitions of homosexual identity. In each instance, a distinctive combination of historical circumstances made Winckelmann's conception of Greek art particularly compelling as the model of a utopian freedom and desire. Equally, these apparently conjunctural encounters were mediated by eroticized and politicized ideals of beauty and of self pervasive in modern Western European culture, which gave Winckelmann's writing and persona such resonance even to those who began to be aware of a historical distance separating their own world from his.

My choice is hardly objective, but neither is it arbitrary. It is informed by my own interests, and unapologetically brings to the fore issues of political ideology and sexual identity that I consider crucial. At the same time, my particular perspective is determined by the larger cultural afterlife of Winckelmann's writing. My view of his work has been moulded by my encounters with earlier evaluations of his project, and the more urgent and persistent issues these have raised are inevitably echoed in what I have chosen to emphasize. There is at work here what a Freudian would call a certain *Nachträglichkeit* or 'deferred action'.<sup>1</sup> Winckelmann's text acquires much of its present-day resonance from traumatic redefinitions of ideological formations of the self and ideal self-images that historically postdate Winckelmann, but which nevertheless cannot now but inform our reading of his work.

In one case I explore the French painter Jacques Louis David's attempts to represent a republican revolutionary ideal by way of the image of a beautiful, sensually charged, male body. This highly politicized projection of a Winckelmannian ideal is located at the heart of radical Jacobin utopian images of a politically free and regenerated subjectivity. We shall see how repressions modulating the apparently immaculate forms of this image of an ideal masculine ego echo tensions and contradictions inherent in Jacobin political ideology. In the other case I shall be looking at Walter Pater's richly invested

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1. J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* (London, 1988), pp. 111–14.

identification with and slight distancing from the model of a 'gay' male identity presented by Winckelmann. Pater both celebrated the image of an aestheticized [sensual manhood](#) he discovered in Winckelmann's writing, seeing it as the model of a self unencumbered by the prohibitions and complexities of modern sexuality, and yet could not quite embrace this model wholeheartedly. I shall be exploring his unease over the active political aspect of Winckelmann's Greek ideal, as well as his intense yet ambivalent engagement with the eroticized 'narcissistic' aspect of this ideal as it emerges in Winckelmann's writing. In each case, we shall see how the Greek ideal's apparent simplicity and wholeness was moulded by tensions, often violent, that it was seeking to displace.

## Revolutionary Heroes<sup>2</sup>

The narratives that unwittingly grip our imagination today are rarely those of renovation, of progress and triumph, but more of dislocation and dismemberment, of irreducible disparities of interest and desire. When, in the later eighteenth century, the call to renew modern art through a return to the pure and simple forms of the antique combined with the demand for political rebirth through a revival of the elevated public values of ancient Greece and Rome, an ideology emerged that seemed to promise a new fusion of desire and virtue. It was as if a radical alternative to the worn-out and corrupt *ancien régime* were being glimpsed in the mythic unities of a rejuvenated classical ideal. What is most striking from our perspective, however, is not so much the utopian aspiration to abolish the excesses and corruption of modern culture by reviving a simpler and truer art and politics. We are probably more aware of the modern stresses and anxieties inflecting the clear outlines of this intensely imagined classical past.

Here we shall be exploring a highly charged engagement with the classical ideal associated with the radical Jacobin phase of the French Revolution, which reconnects with Winckelmann's attempt to represent the beauty of the Greek ideal as the embodiment of political freedom.<sup>3</sup> In particular, we shall be concerned with the work of David as an artist who, unusually, managed to bring to bear on his artistic practice a very active engagement with revolutionary politics. His work in the 1790s effected a

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2. This section is a considerably revised version of a paper, 'De Winckelmann à David: la figuration visuelle des idéaux politiques', given at a symposium *David contre David* in Paris in 1989 and published in *History Workshop Journal* (Oxford University Press), no. 30, 1990, pp. 1–21, under the title 'Beautiful Bodies and Dying Heroes'.

3. On the political resonances of 'high' art supposedly informed by the values of the antique in late eighteenth-century France see T. E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven and London, 1985), and R. Michel, 'L'Art des Salons', in P. Bordes and R. Michel, *Aux armes et aux arts: les arts de la Révolution 1789–1799* (Paris, 1988).

particularly fascinating conjunction between the aesthetic resonances of the classical ideal and the political ones of the new republicanism. At issue is not just a general association between the antique and republican freedom, but something more complex and demanding, a loading of the distinctive beauty of the ideal nude with highly politicized notions of a truly free subject—a synthesis constantly threatened with destabilization. Looking closely at the tenor of David's engagement with the antique in the immediate aftermath of the 1789 Revolution, no less than exploring the resonances of Winckelmann's earlier identification with the Greek ideal, is to be made acutely aware of radical disjunctions within the apparently purified unities of Neoclassical imagery, disjunctions that are not just circumstantial and contingent, but central to its rhetorical power.

In the earlier work by David designed to be loaded with ethical or political significance, there is a fairly obvious way in which the resonances of style and message fit together. Ideas of heroic austerity, of virile nobility, could apply equally to the message or to the formal conception of such works as the *Oath of the Horatii*, the *Death of Socrates*, and the *Brutus*. As spectators, we might wish to identify with and admire the Horatii, but we are not invited to desire them. This changes in a number of works that were produced or had their origins in the 1790s. The rendering of the male figure is more sensuously graceful and beautiful, and the relation between its now nude rather than austere draped forms and the political ideal supposedly embodied by it no longer seems so direct. This new phase in David's classical history painting was seen by contemporaries as marking a turn to a formal preoccupation with ideal Greek beauty, which, according to Delécluze, David's biographer and student, David himself felt to be a programmatic departure from the less aesthetically pure 'Roman' artistic vocabulary he had used before.<sup>4</sup>

The change is not necessarily to be seen as a retreat from politics into aestheticism. It is particularly in evidence in *The Death of Bara* (Plate 42), a work like the austere and

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4. E. J. Delécluze, *Louis David: son école et son temps* (Paris, 1855), pp. 120, 218 ff.; and also M. Fried, 'Thomas Couture and the Theatricalization of Action in Nineteenth Century French Painting', *Artforum*, June 1970, p. 41. Discussions of the aesthetic and political resonances of the new more sensuous and 'beautiful' conception of the male nude in Davidian painting of the 1790s that I found particularly helpful when elaborating this analysis were R. Michel, 'Bara: Du Martyr à l'Ephèbe', in *La Mort de Bara*, pp. 67 ff., W. Olander, *Pour Transmettre à la Postérité: French Painting and Revolution* (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1983), particularly pp. 295 ff., and a lecture by T. Crow given in London in 1988, a version of which was published under the title 'Revolutionary Activism and the Cult of Male Beauty in the Studio of David' in B. Ford (ed.), *Fictions of the French Revolution* (Chicago, 1991). There now exists a considerable body of work on homoeroticism in French Neoclassical painting of the 1790s and early 1800s; see W. Davis, 'Homoeroticism and Revolutionary Reason in Girodet's *Endymion*' (lecture, 1993), A. Solomon-Godeau, 'Male Trouble: a Crisis in Representation', *Art History*, 16, 1993, pp. 286–312, and C. Ockman, 'Profiling Homoeroticism: Ingres' Achilles Receiving the Ambassadors of Agamemnon', *Art Bulletin*, 75, 1993, pp. 259–74.

manly *Death of Marat* produced at the height of the most radical phase of the French Revolution, in which David was so closely involved. With the *Bara*, which has often been singled out as peculiarly Winckelmannian in conception, and also to some extent with *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* (Plate 41) and the *Leonidas* (Plate 43), there is a fairly straightforward, if not particularly compelling formal connection between a noble political message and an artistic style. Elevated subject-matter requires the most elevated possible artistic vocabulary, the pure forms of the antique ideal nude. But the rhetorical power of the latter derives from an erotic engagement with the body, with bodily beauty, which is not conventionally associated with ideas of austere virtue. Indeed in the late Enlightenment, the elevation of thought informing political virtue was if anything seen to be at odds with the erotic and the voluptuary. What is going on, then, when a 'manly' politics of freedom is being invoked by way of an intensely sensual bodily beauty? It is here that the conjunction between a beautiful art and a high ideal projected in Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* becomes relevant.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1789 Revolution, the aesthetic ideal cultivated by politically committed artists would seem to relate quite closely to David's earlier 'manly' Roman style, and not to the more voluptuary Winckelmannian Greek ideal. Take the attempts made in the early 1790s to define a revolutionary artistic practice, as recorded in Détournelle's *Journal de la Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts*. A much quoted entry dating from 1794 talks about how the art of the new republican order, which would inspire love of virtue and hatred of despotism, would be characterized by 'masculine contours, an energetic drawing'. But this entry comes close after another in which Winckelmann is invoked as 'the only one to have described with some dignity the beauties of the antique',<sup>5</sup> that is, as the best guide to understanding the vocabulary of a truly regenerated classical art. It is just at this point that David's own art gives evidence of a re-engagement with the antique in which bodily beauty and sensuality start taking precedence over the austere muscularity of his earlier, more obviously heroic, or should one say stoically virile style.

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5. A. Détournelle, *Aux armes et aux arts: peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure: Journal de la Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts* (Paris [1794]), p. 169; the journal records the proceedings of the Société between February and May 1794. The celebration of Winckelmann occurs in a report drawn up by Détournelle on a private collection of casts of famous antique statues that the Société was negotiating to make available to young artists in order to encourage study of the antique. The quote on *contours mâles* comes from the announcement for a competition for a monument to the French people on the Isle de Paris. The Société Populaire, which described itself as made up of 'free men who have made an oath . . . only to exercise their genius to celebrate republican virtues' (Détournelle, p. 3), had been established as a radical republican alternative to the recently abolished French Royal Academy.



Before analysing this turn in David's work, we need to look at the evidence that Winckelmann's writings, and in particular his Greek ideal, were a significant presence in French artistic culture of the period. The years around 1790 do indeed mark something of an upturn in French engagement with Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity*. The new translation by H. J. Jansen, which first appeared between 1790 and 1794, re-established Winckelmann's text as the fullest compendium in French of information on the art of antiquity, bringing it up to date with a vast scholarly apparatus of notes and supplementary articles. At this point the text ceased to be purely Winckelmann's, and functioned as an encyclopaedia of the art of antiquity. Together with turning Winckelmann's book into a monument, his conceptual framework came to be examined in a much more thoroughgoing way than before. His analysis of the aesthetics of the antique ideal, and of the political and cultural context that fostered the flourishing of Greek art, became a major point of focus for the ideologically charged debates on the history and aesthetics of art taking place at the time.<sup>6</sup>

Central to the reputation Winckelmann enjoyed among the more politically radical artists and theorists was his eloquent formulation of the widely held view that 'freedom' was the 'principal cause of the pre-eminence of Greek art', and that art had inevitably gone into decline once this political freedom had been lost, particularly under the Roman Empire.<sup>7</sup> For obvious reasons, a theory that there existed an intimate connection between a purified classical aesthetic and the politics of liberty enjoyed an unprecedented vogue in France in the years immediately after 1789. Winckelmann could readily be assimilated to the view that a true revival and flourishing of art would be directed against the accepted values of French *ancien régime* court culture, and would emerge from a revival of the republican freedom of early Greek and Roman antiquity. But it was then no longer simply a matter of looking back to early Greek antiquity as a utopia, when art was free from the repressions and corruptions of the modern court. Now the concerns were much more immediately political: how would artistic practice respond to the conditions of liberty produced by the overthrow of the French monarchy?

After the first flush of libertarian enthusiasm, when middle-class radicals looked forward to a spontaneous efflorescence of art and culture stimulated by the newly reactivated spirit of liberty<sup>8</sup>—when Winckelmann's ancient Greece seemed to provide a

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6. On the reception of Winckelmann's writings in France, see E. Pommier, 'Winckelmann et la vision de L'Antiquité classique dans la France des Lumières et de la Révolution', *Revue de L'Art*, 83, 1989, pp. 9ff., and also Potts, 'Political Attitudes', pp. 200 ff.  
 7. *Geschichte*, n. 316. On Winckelmann's conception of Greek freedom, see nn. 54 ff.

model for a regenerated republican France—we begin to notice a tension developing between overtly political talk about the function of art, and aesthetic talk about the Greek ideal and the fostering of a purified artistic practice based upon it. A combination of a desire for a fusion between political freedom and aesthetic beauty, and an anxiety over a potential split [between the two, was already an issue in Winckelmann's writings, even if it did not have the same direct political urgency, nor was explicitly debated, as it was to be in French artistic circles in the 1790s. The deliberations of the Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts indicate that, already by 1794, a concern was mounting among the more politically aware members of the artistic community that aesthetic standards might have to be artificially encouraged even under the new conditions of republican freedom.](#)<sup>9</sup>

This implicit questioning of the utopian desire for an integrated unity between the aesthetic and the political, between great art and republican freedom, marks a prelude to the re-institutionalization of artistic education and doctrine with the foundation of the Institut under the Directoire. Eventually what emerged was what we might call a post-revolutionary academicism, which was quite sceptical of the libertarian expectations of artistic renewal through political change that made Winckelmann's projection of the connection between art and freedom such an important point of reference in the years just after 1789. If we look ahead to the essays produced for the competition sponsored by the Institut in 1801 on the causes of the perfection of antique sculpture, we notice not only a new stress on correct artistic doctrine and a certain disillusionment with the idea that good art and political freedom necessarily went hand in hand. There was also a quite un-Winckelmannian tendency to mark out a separation between the artistic and political spheres. The influential apostle of a bureaucratic *juste milieu*, Eméric-David, for example, cited the precedent of Greek antiquity as an example of how a classical perfection in art could be sustained despite political change and turmoil. Fostering a modern equivalent of the Greek ideal was projected as purely a matter of artistic policy, which could operate in safe isolation from the more disturbing vicissitudes and confusions of political life.<sup>10</sup>

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8. In the early years of the Revolution, it was widely claimed that political freedom would of itself spontaneously give rise to a rejuvenated public art without the need for state intervention; see, for example, the pamphlet by H. J. Jansen, Winckelmann's translator, *Projet tendant à conserver les arts en France, en immortalisant les événemens patriotiques et les citoyens illustres* (Paris, 1791). Such libertarianism soon gave way to a renewed concern with propagating a 'correct' artistic doctrine. Particularly after Thermidor, the view began to take a hold that official government intervention [would be required to encourage the arts](#) (see E. Pommier, *L'Art et la Liberté: doctrines et débats de la Révolution* (Paris, 1990), pp. 250 ff.).

Even in the early 1790s, when classical aesthetics and a republican political idealism did seem naturally to go together, one central issue tended to be evaded rather than addressed directly—how precisely did the sensual forms of the ideal nude actually symbolize or embody the elevated ethical and political values associated with political freedom? It was in this context that another aspect of Winckelmann's writing was of particular importance for French revolutionary artistic culture, namely his famous descriptions or close readings of the best-known masterpieces of antique sculpture. These were widely quoted and paraphrased at the time. Not only do they feature prominently in Détournelle's *Journal de la Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts*, but Détournelle relied on extensive quotations from Winckelmann to suggest a correlation between the beauty of antique statuary and ideals of political freedom.<sup>11</sup>

It is because Winckelmann's descriptions project both the erotic charge and the elevated meaning of these works with such intensity that they reveal so much more than other writings on the antique in the period about how the sensual forms of the ideal nude might be read as embodiments of the high values associated with the antique. This also means that Winckelmann exposes the problems involved. We encounter directly, within Winckelmann's descriptions, a usually unacknowledged disparity between images that are redolent of the pleasure associated with either looking at a beautiful body or fantasizing that one inhabits such a body, and the more abstract conception of ideal beauty as a signifier of an elevated free subjectivity. Can the body that gives the most intense pleasure also be the one that most powerfully evokes a free expansive subjectivity produced by political freedom? As we have seen, Winckelmann's readings answer both yes and no. And this unstable correlation is played out again in interesting ways in David's overtly politicized attempts to project an aesthetically purified 'Greek' image of the male body as the emblem of an ideal heroic self.

The gendering operating in both Winckelmann's and David's time made the male body the only possible focus for such an unstable and highly charged conjunction. This is a simple factor of the casual exclusion of the feminine from most radical eighteenth-century discourse about the free subject. Moreover, the ideal female body in art

**10.** On the competition, see F. Benoît, *L'Art français sous la Révolution et l'Empire* (Paris, 1897), p. 104. Eméric-David's prize-winning essay was published under the title *Recherches sur l'art statuaire considéré chez les anciens et chez les modernes* (Paris, 1805).

**11.** Where Détournelle does not rely on a paraphrase of Winckelmann, he tends simply to place side by side passages celebrating the antique in austere republican terms, and erotically charged descriptions of the sensuous beauties of famous statues, without negotiating a transition between the two (see, for example, *Aux armes* . . . (note 4), pp. 158 and 161).



conventionally had a relatively simple function as a signifier of sensuous beauty, as the object of desire, uncomplicated by association with more austere ideas of freedom and heroism. It was only in the representation of an ideally beautiful male body that tensions between the body as the locus of pleasure and desire, and an ethical investment of the body as the sign of an ideal subjectivity, the ideal subjectivity of the virtuous and free republican subject, could be played out. This gendered distinction between the ideal male and female nude is quite explicit in the differential responses to the most widely celebrated male and female figures surviving from antiquity, the Apollo Belvedere and the Venus de Medici.<sup>12</sup> Thus a French writer on art and champion of Davidian Neoclassicism, Vivant Denon, cited Winckelmann's characterization of the Apollo (Plate 19) when posing this antithesis between it and the Venus de' Medici (Plate 25): 'it has been said "that one has never looked at the Apollo without oneself adopting a prouder attitude". I believe that one can say that one has never talked about the Venus without attaching to its name a caressing epithet.'<sup>13</sup>

The complex investment of the ideal male nude in Winckelmann found increasingly fewer echoes in the new wave of art theory produced in France after the fall of Robespierre, when the idea of an institutionalized art academy again began to gain a hold. The later discussion of the antique ideal tended to exclude explicit evocations of the erotic and the body, as it did the contentiously political. In this high aesthetic domain, pleasure was allowable only in so far as it could be conceived as categorically different from bodily lusts or desires, just as the ethical significance of art came increasingly to be severed from the supposedly 'prosaic' realities of politics. In Quatremère de Quincy's unbendingly abstract definitions of ideal beauty, or Eméric David's unremittingly bureaucratic analysis, such issues are almost hysterically repressed. Winckelmann's 'over-enthusiastic' prose began to elicit a certain amount of [sceptical commentary](#),<sup>14</sup> even while his descriptions remained an indispensable point of reference for those seeking to

12. See Chapter IV, note 19.

13. Vivant Denon, *Discours sur les monuments d'antiquité arrivés d'Italie prononcé le 8 vendémiaire an XII à la séance publique de la classe des beaux arts de l'Institut National* (Paris [1804]), pp. 19–20. The passage in quotes paraphrases a passage from Winckelmann's description of the Apollo Belvedere (*Geschichte*, p. 393).

14. When the tide turned in the years around 1800 towards a more academic view of the 'ideal beauty' of antique statuary, Winckelmann's highly charged celebrations of the Greek ideal were often criticized for their excessive enthusiasm (see, for example, N. Ponce, *Mémoire sur cette question proposée par l'Institut National: quelles ont été les causes de la perfection de la sculpture antique, et quels seroient les moyens d'y atteindre?* (Paris, an IX (1801)), pp. 40ff., and T. B. Eméric-David, *Recherches sur l'art statuaire* . . . (Paris, 1805), p. 278. These attacks on Winckelmann were ostensibly directed against the implication that the finest ancient art represented an almost unattainable ideal. It also seems, however, that his vivid evocations of antique beauty brought to the fore desires and fantasies deemed inappropriate to the professional scholarly discourse then coming into fashion.

convince their audience that the Greek ideal could be intensely evocative of sensual interests and desires without their having to spell this out themselves.

Here we shall focus on two works by David, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, conceived in 1795 and completed in 1799, and *The Death of Bara*, produced in 1794. The *Sabines* (Plate 41) is the less problematic and strenuous work, and could be seen as operating in a mode comparable to Winckelmann's conception of the beautiful style. A graceful and sensuous beauty is very much to the fore, and high or austere value intimated at one remove. That the picture invites a new kind of reading, in which the bodily beauty of the male figures plays a central role, as distinct from some austere virile presence more conventionally associated with the figure of the hero, is evident in Chaussard's classic analysis of the work published in 1800.



41. J. L. David, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, oil, 1799, Louvre, Paris.

When Chaussard defines the relative significance of two main protagonists in the drama, Romulus, on the right, is singled out as the dominant figure for being the most intensely beautiful, while Tatius, his foil, on the left, is seen as more prosaically virile. Romulus is 'in the attitude of a demi-god, calm, elevated, above humanity, *beautiful in his youth and heroism*'. Tatius, on the other hand, is 'closer to a mortal (form) in the sharpness of his contours, and in the expression of his face, where ferocity mingles with *courage*'.<sup>15</sup> Beauty rather than character or action has become the primary signifier of heroic virtue. The imposing yet supply graceful figure of Romulus has certain affinities

15. P. Chaussard, *Sur le tableau des Sabine s par David* (Paris, 1800), pp. 7–8.

with the image of the Apollo Belvedere (Plate 19) as projected by Winckelmann. Its powerful expansiveness is represented, less as calmly noble than as *both* violently dominating and irresistibly seductive. It is through a potentially unstable conjunction of heroic strength and exquisite sensuality that the figure acquires its charge. There is though one very significant difference between Romulus and Apollo. With Romulus the gesture of violent domination is forever blocked. Heroic self-realization in an act of unthinking destructiveness is stalled by the intervention of the female figures. The warrior ethic is both projected as compellingly beautiful and held in check. As in almost all David's more ambitious canvases, a tension charged by an ethical value visibly ruptures the apparent classic unity of the picture.

Significantly, Chaussard's reading puts the figure of Hersilia, who at one level is the central motif, the activating force suspending the imminent cataclysm, in a secondary role. In his reading, this draped female figure functions as the vehicle of dramatic sentiment and expression, and as such does not have the same highly charged presence as the beautiful, heroic male nudes. Here we have echoes of Winckelmann's theory that what is most essential and highest about a figure is made manifest in a state of repose, and can only be veiled or distorted by action.<sup>16</sup> The naked male bodies are the embodiment of an ideal subjectivity, while the draped female body acts as the organ of feeling and expression, as in some sense a cipher in a drama grounded in the male figures' presence.

The unspoken assumption at work in the masculine gendering of the figure that is ethically exemplary as well as physically desirable is quite clear. The ideal subject, the exemplary subject of freedom, is assumed to be a man. The beautiful male figure can thus function as both an ideal object of desire and an ideal subjectivity with which the male spectator can identify. In this ideological and sexual economy, the female body is either a marginalized erotic image, denied the ethical and political investment given to the male body; or it functions in a quite different mode. Clothed, austere, maternal, it becomes, as in Winckelmann's scheme of things, a de-eroticized and hence partly disembodied signifier.<sup>17</sup>

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16. *Geschichte*, pp. 167–8.

17. For a discussion of the emphatically male gendering of the ideal subject during the years of the French Revolution, see Dorinda Outram's *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class and Political Culture* (New Haven and London, 1989). Outram's book (see particularly pp. 48 ff., 81 ff., 94 ff.), as well as Carol Duncan's important article on the vicissitudes and eventual revival of the heroic male in French painting of the later eighteenth century ('Fallen Fathers: Images of Authority in Pre-Revolutionary French Art', *Art History*, 4, June 1981, particularly pp. 198 ff.), played a major part in the genesis of the ideas developed here.

It is in the interest he shows in a relatively marginal figure in the picture, however, that Chaussard makes most apparent a Winckelmannian preoccupation with the sensually charged beauty of the male nude. At first sight, his singling out of Tatius' exquisite young equerry might seem rather arbitrary. But the figure is not just enjoyed for its formal perfection. Rather it is assigned a value that derives precisely from its apparently gratuitous youthful beauty. According to Chaussard, 'this figure is perhaps the most beautiful of the painting, at least it is the one that best recalls the beautiful antique.' As such, it cannot participate in the action, the artist fearing 'to dilute its beauty by giving it any expression other than that of ingenuousness'. Its role in the picture is to embody 'those youthful and admirable forms that are redolent of the ideal'.<sup>18</sup> At one level, the figure is an exercise in formal perfection; at another, its presence as 'pure' self-absorbed body, detached from the drama, enables it to act as a signifier of an ideal world that is more immediate, less encumbered than the whole complex drama. As in modernism later on, the signification of some higher value becomes more direct and intense by virtue of its self-referentiality. But what value?

This is the point to turn to the earlier painting of Bara (Plate 42), where the issue takes on a special urgency. For here there is no obvious signifier other than an erotically charged, naked, youthful body. At least this is how David left the incomplete painting, whose destiny as a public image was frustrated by the fall of the Jacobins and the suspension of the revolutionary martyr cult for which it had been conceived. Though the painting's power is integrally bound up with the nudity of the figure of Bara, it has been argued that David might at some point have intended the figure to be partly draped. But he left it nude, and displayed it prominently in this form in his studio as a work that had a special talismanic status for him. A largely nude format would be consistent with David's other famous, completed, martyr image, *The Death of Marat*. Nudity also makes sense in relation to the figure's symbolic function as a timeless exemplary icon, rather than a particularizing dramatization of a historical event.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Chaussard, *Sabines*, p. 17.

19. See references in note 22.



42. J. L. David, *The Death of Bara*, oil, 1794, Musée Calvet, Avignon.

The work has a fascinating and unusually fully documented history as a political image, some details of which are worth recalling here. Its political genesis located it quite explicitly in the realm of ideal imagery. The story of the [boy martyr Bara was a carefully fabricated myth created by the Jacobin government when it was trying to mobilize popular support for an ideology of purified revolutionary virtue in the months before its overthrow in July 1794](#). The mythic aspect of the story of Bara is already in evidence from the very moment when a report was read to the Convention in December 1793 about a boy called Bara, attached to the Republican army fighting in the Vendée, who had been killed by counter-revolutionary insurgents. Robespierre exploited the interest aroused by the incident, skillfully reinventing the somewhat prosaic circumstances of Bara's reported death. In a speech to the Convention a few days later, he refashioned the story of Bara's dying moments to make of it an exemplary drama of virtuous self-sacrifice, in which the youth expired proclaiming '*Vive la République*' in defiance of his murderers' demand that he capitulate and repeat '*Vive le roi*.' In the following months, David brought to bear his own highly charged visual and verbal rhetoric to amplify further this mythic apotheosis as he took charge of the official commemoration of Bara and another boy hero called Viala.<sup>20</sup>

Some of the more carefully thought out recent interpretations of the picture seek to make it less problematic it by pointing out that the apparent strangeness of its depiction of a naked youth clutching the tricolour to his heart arises from our tendency to read such works naturalistically, rather than allegorically, as they were originally intended. To

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20. For references see note 25.



see the figure's exposure as intimating violation, as did some critics writing after David's death, when they envisaged Bara as brutally unclothed by the brigands who killed him, would be to betray an anachronistic romanticism. The beautiful and graceful nudity is to be seen as a formal idealizing device that makes the figure into a more effective signifier of heroic virtue than a naturalistic clothed image of the boy hero. Any disjunction we might see between ideas of virtue and the eroticized presence of this seemingly helpless naked body is not integral to the image's public or political signifying power. Its message would be in tune with the comments David made in his famous discourse to the Convention, when he called for a commemoration of Bara and the other boy hero, Viala, 'that bears, following their example, the character of republican simplicity, and the august imprint of virtue'.<sup>21</sup>

If we leave things here, however, we are in danger of falling into a kind of formalism that mirrors the earlier academic appropriation of David's work as the embodiment of a purified classicism. We are bracketing out the rhetorical power of the image, and its invitation to erotically charged and violent readings, on the grounds that these seem to be irrelevant to the public political meanings it was intended to convey. But this rhetoric is not just something that has to do with private, romanticized responses to the work, but rather with its potential public significance. There is no denying that, at a certain level, the image had to be open to a simple reading. It must have been conceived as a vehicle for a clear political message of the kind envisaged by David and Robespierre in their speeches to the Convention.<sup>22</sup> But some rather intense and potentially disturbing complexities are inevitably introduced when, as here, ideas of virtue, of [political heroism and freedom, are being projected onto and through images redolent of desire. Some overloading of David's apparently simple image of Bara is intrinsic to its historical condition. It lies at a conjunction of extreme ambitions, both political and aesthetic, and still interests us today as being caught up in the over-determined failure of these](#)

**21.** J. L. David, 'Rapport sur la Fête Héroïque pour les honneurs du Panthéon à décerner aux jeunes Bara et Viala' (11 July 1794), in *La Mort de Bara*, p. 160.

**22.** For the most fully argued case that the naked figure of Bara was conceived, not as an erotic image, but as an abstract representation of heroic virtue—that in other words its nudity makes it into a Neoclassical allegory conveying an 'ideal' political message—see R. Michel, 'Bara' in *La Mort de Bara*, pp. 66 ff. In contrast, the late William Olander's fine analysis of the painting in his unpublished dissertation *Pour transmettre à la postérité* (note 4, pp. 295–302) takes a view similar to that developed in this study, namely that the sexuality of the figure works to heighten its pathos as a mythic image of uncorrupted revolutionary man sacrificed in the highest cause. The painting was one that must have had a particular significance for David. According to his pupil Delécluze (*Louis David*, 1855, pp. 19–20; see also *La Mort de Bara*, p. 18), it was prominently displayed in the painter's studio in the late 1790s along with the *Oath of the Horatii* and *Brutus*. The erotic charge of the dying youth, as Olander has pointed out, was underlined in an interesting way by David's early biographer, Alexandre Lenoir, who saw it as echoing the figure of the beautiful boy and lover of Apollo, Hyacinth, killed accidentally by a quoit thrown by the god ('Mémoires, David, Souvenirs Historiques', *Journal de l'Institut Historique*, III, 1835, p. 6).

ambitions. So much is invested and repressed in this conception of an unblemished yet damaged subject of a pure yet violated freedom and virtue.

If we are to see the conjunction of psychic and political fantasy in the *Bara* as echoing aspects of Winckelmann's conception of the ideal youth, we should still of course have to recognize the major ideological shift between Winckelmann's investment of the Greek ideal and such 'Jacobin' images of revolutionary heroes. In Winckelmann, a fairly abstract notion of elevated value is projected onto the erotically charged, beautiful male body, however explicitly it is associated with political freedom. In the early 1790s in France, not only had the idea of freedom become a site of violent political contention, but the function and evocative power of a public art, the ideological investment in art, had itself become extremely politicized in a way it had not been before. The ideal subjectivity signified by the ideal body, the virtue embodied in its beauty, was a public political issue in a way that it could not have been for Winckelmann. Nevertheless the tensions inherent in the utopian image of a free male subject found in revolutionary culture are not totally distinct from those that surface in the more radical moments of the late Enlightenment. Also shared are the rhetorical devices through which the image of the ideal male body is made into such a powerfully invested motif, devices that work by associating heroic values, or virtue as Robespierre would say, with largely disavowed stirrings of sado-masochistic desire.

In exploring how David's *Bara* might play upon some of the complex tropes of the ideal nude found in Winckelmann, we shall take as read that its ideal nudity functioned as a conventional sign of ideal political value. The point here will be to consider its excessive aspects, which may even appear to be at odds with the first-order reading of the boy as an image that associates the ideal of the beautiful classical nude with the ideal of the politically virtuous subject. It is a matter of trying to understand how the particular formation, the particular aesthetic charge of the figure, heightens and gives body to its political charge. In doing so, we shall see how the conception of the picture both plays upon rhetorical devices developed by Winckelmann in his readings of antique statuary, but also in certain important ways moves beyond the ideological and psychic parameters of Winckelmann's writing. Like his image of the absolutely ideal youth, the *Bara* is both empty and complex, everything and nothing, posited on a simultaneous disavowal and incitement of potentially disturbing fantasies that are only partially displaced, but not expunged, by its 'innocent' youthfulness.

Displacement operates in the very way the figure is presented in a state of rest, as an almost beautiful object of desire, existing beyond the violent drama that is essential to its meaning. The mechanism is akin to that in [Winckelmann's reading of the ideal nude that associates a figure's beautiful, eroticized presence with its self-realization in violent action by way of displacement](#). At times this can take an intensely violent turn. In [Winckelmann's descriptions of the Belvedere Antinous \(Plate 31\) and the Belvedere Torso \(Plate 36\)](#), the figure is first and foremost a beautiful being absorbed in its own bodily presence, but it is also possessed of a heroic subjectivity whose unfolding is projected onto either its past or its future. The exquisitely modulated flesh, the supple flowing contours, both efface, while still conjuring up at one remove, the hero's violent trials of strength.<sup>23</sup>

A displacement of this kind operates in the image of Bara, at the same time that it takes a rather different, more destabilizing form. Bara is represented as still just living through the very last moments of an intense drama, dying and clutching the tricolour, not yet entirely transfigured in death—nor, for all his youthful grace and integrity of form, existing entirely beyond the reach of violent threats from the world around. It is in this respect different too from David's *Marat*, whose transfiguration is more resolved, comparable to that of a dead Christ in a *Pietà*. The fusion of blissful transfiguration and painful ecstasy achieved on the verge of death puts one in mind of more feminized Christian imagery, such as Bernini's *Ecstasy of St Teresa*. There a female saint is shown in a spasm of bliss and pain as she surrenders to a mystic self-annihilation. The figure of Bara is more suggestive of such a passive surrender to a power greater than itself than it is of a manly feat of heroic resistance.

Bara's body is not just beautiful. It is also violated, shown at the moment of release as death is expunging the boy's pain. Such a trope of the heroic subject, as one who achieves his moment of transcendence in an encounter with death, is deeply ingrained in the cultural politics of Robespierrian Jacobinism. As the Commission d'Instruction Publique put it in an announcement published on the 12 July 1794, the message that the dead heroes of the Revolution have to convey to the people of France is 'How beautiful it is to die for one's country.'<sup>24</sup> The most intensely moving heroic body is a damaged body, one that has the pathos of a vulnerable yet indomitable subject facing annihilation. In

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<sup>23</sup>. See pp. 179 ff.

<sup>24</sup>. *La Mort de Bara*, 1989 (note 3), p. 175.

Winckelmann, this trope of heroism is very vividly played out in the reading of the Laocoön (Plate 16). The figure's beauty—and its heroics—are made more interesting and elevated by way of its violent struggle against death. The virile body becomes powerfully moving by being represented as threatened or damaged.

Winckelmann's description of the Laocoön, though, is even more illuminating in relation to the *Bara* with its suggestion that the viewer's experience of the figure climaxes in a conjunction of intensely engaging bodily beauty and violent pain. An unease and fascination provoked by 'beautiful violence', more than the admiration excited by a heroic struggle, is what seems to make this ideal male body interesting. But if the fascination aroused by the *Bara* is also in part derived from projections of sado-masochistic fantasy, these have a rather different inflection because of the suggestions of a feminized pathos and vulnerability that simply do not feature in Winckelmann's world—even where, as in his description of the Niobe (Plate 15), he imagines a female figure threatened by deadly violence. It is as if in order to give the boy hero *Bara* the most intense emotional charge possible, David has to move outside the sphere of masculinity and draw upon the apparently more vivid imagery of a violated femininity. The figure of *Bara* allows a certain narcissistic identification from the male viewer. But it is also the object of a sentimentalized pity and sadistic pleasure conventionally associated in male fantasy with the female body.

The most Winckelmannian aspect of David's painting of *Bara* was the way it envisaged a pre-pubertal youth as the purest—perhaps also most elevated—embodiment of an ideal subjectivity. In parallel with Winckelmann, the very highest ideal came to be represented through the image of a boyish youth rather than a mature hero because of the relative absence in the youth of marks of a formed sexual or cultural identity. *Bara* was conceived as a pre-sexual ephebe, almost hermaphroditic, emptied of the particularities and imperfections of the mature male subject. It was his emptiness or innocence that made him the perfect vehicle for personifying an untainted republican virtue. As Barère explained in a speech delivered to the Convention on 28 December 1793, just after Robespierre 'invented' *Bara* as a national hero fit for the honours of the Panthéon: 'Generals, representatives, philosophers, may be excited by pride or by some ambition or other; here it is virtue in its integrity, simple and modest, as it left the hands of nature.'<sup>25</sup>

25. Quoted in *La Mort de Bara*, 1989, p. 143. See W. Olander (note 22, pp. 295 ff.) for a discussion of how the distinctive symbolic charge of David's image of the boy hero *Bara* tied in with the exigencies of Jacobin political ideology at this moment

Among the great unspoken distinctions being effaced in this speech, and by implication too in David's painting, are of course those highly contentious ones of class and gender. The image of a young boy displaces questions about social identity much more effectively than that of a man. He can be defined as not having a history, as coming straight from the arms of nature. Yet the ideality of David's figure of Bara is, ideologically speaking, highly specific. He is the Bara of a radical middle-class imagination, besieged by contending populist and revisionist pressures. He is Robespierre's virtuous Bara, who died uttering the words '*Vive la République*', not the plebeian Bara imagined by his protector, General Desmarres, whose dying words would make a travesty of David's image—or should we say whose confused yet vigorous words David's image could only travesty: 'Up yours you useless crook . . .'<sup>26</sup> Similarly we could read the class repressions inherent in David's *Leonidas at the Pass of Thermopylae* (Plate 43), his most comprehensive and ambitious projection of a heroic masculinity, using the words deployed by Robespierre just after liquidating the Hébertists: 'It is a long way . . . from Leonidas to Père Duchesne.'<sup>27</sup>

Again, there is a crucial distinction between David's and Winckelmann's conceptions of the ideal youth that has to do with the implicit femininity of the *Bara*. In David's painting, the 'unvirile' youth was characterized, not just as a presexual male, but as in some sense endowed with a feminine identity. There are intimations of the figure's undergoing some intense erotic experience that produces a quite unmasculine trope of desire. In this attempt to fashion an [image of the ideal self as both hero and martyr, which was as intensely moving and beautiful as possible, both the forms of the body and the emotional charge with which these forms were endowed had to be partly feminized.](#)

The painting of Bara was conceived in a context where the issue of femininity was a particularly contentious one at a number of levels, in ways that had a direct bearing on the martyr cult of which the painting formed part. Who had the right to become an exemplary revolutionary subject? In theory, potentially everyone. But in reality women

26. Desmarres reported how Bara died refusing to give up the two horses that were in his charge. [Robespierre's dramatizing of Bara's dying words occurred in a speech made to the Convention on 28 December 1793. General Desmarres's letter was read out to the Convention Nationale on 10 January 1794 \(See \*La Mort de Bara\*, pp. 142–3\). On the invention of the cult of the boy hero Bara, see Jean-Clément Martin, 'Bara: de l'imaginaire révolutionnaire à la mémoire nationale' \(in \*La Mort de Bara\*\), and also J. C. Sloane's pioneering article, 'David, Robespierre and the Death of Bara', \*Gazette des Beaux Arts\*, LXXIV, 1969, pp. 143 ff.](#)

27. The passage comes from Robespierre's speech to the Convention Nationale on 7 May 1794 (*La Mort de Bara*, p. 148). For a recent discussion of Jacques-René Hébert and the abrasively populist rhetoric of his famous revolutionary paper *Le Père Duchesne*, see E. Colwill, 'Just Another *Citoyenne*? Marie-Antoinette on Trial, 1790–1793', *History Workshop Journal*, 28, Autumn 1989, pp. 63 ff.



were partially excluded from this role because, though they could be victims, there was an injunction against their acting as public heroes. Male anxieties over the new visibility of women in the public sphere led to legislation being passed that categorically excluded women from political life, in a way that had not been necessary before. At the same time, in the symbolic economy of revolutionary culture, the image of the ideal woman played a crucial role. The charge attached to the female figure was widely exploited in the new imagery of the republic. Liberty in particular was represented exclusively as female. At the level of allegory and symbol, the female figure functioned as the embodiment of male political desire. David's *Bara* might be seen as straddling the differently gendered roles of female symbolic ideal and male public hero. He was both the feminine embodiment of liberty and republic and the masculine embodiment of heroic endeavour. He simultaneously played the role of passive female victim or helpless martyr and of active male hero struggling against all odds. S/he was an impossible figure representing the ideal revolutionary subject as both masculine and feminine, in a situation where in reality gender distinctions made this confluence quite illegitimate and the feminine was excluded from self-presentation on the stage of political life.

In Jacobin ideology, how was the female subject co-opted into the project of political regeneration and at the same time excluded from it? David's speech to the Convention on the commemoration of *Bara* is an interesting case in point because it is so explicit about the gendered division in an ideal revolutionary order between male heroics and its female complement. The feminine becomes the embodiment of pleasure and comfort, set against the violent struggles and trials of strength of a heroic masculinity. The duality could be seen as both blurred and reaffirmed in David's *Bara*, whose feminized heroic body seeks to encompass violent male struggle and the balm of a feminized aftermath in one image.

David's speech begins with a celebration of the struggle against despotism, and then turns at the end from the pathos of the dead hero to the rewards awaiting the battle-scarred heroes who survive. Wounded yet purged in the struggle, they are imagined as returning to enjoy a life of peace and pleasure, prepared by the chaste yet fertile women who await them. However, the most intense beauty achieved in the aftermath of heroic struggle is still in the final analysis located in the damaged male body. Here is David's address to the young women of France:

Victory will bring back to you friends worthy of you ... be careful not to despise these illustrious defenders of liberty covered with honourable scars. The scars of the heroes of liberty are the richest dowry and the most durable ornament. After having served their country in the most glorious war, may they taste with you the sweetness of a peaceful life. May your virtues, may your chaste fecundity, increase a hundredfold the resources of the fatherland.<sup>28</sup>

From a present-day perspective, this hardly sounds like a revolutionary utopia, not least because it seems so unconsciously complicit in the crudest bourgeois repressions and myths of femininity. The pathologies we see operating in such an ideology of rigidly defined sexual difference are nakedly dramatized here in a way that they are not in Robespierre's more abstract, closely argued political speeches, for example. In so far as we can talk about pathology in this context, it is not simply to be ascribed to David as an individual. Given the public context of his speech, it is quite clear that the images and myths he invoked were part of a broader symbolic currency. At their most positive, they could be seen as peculiarly vivid projections of antinomies within a desired revolutionary self, antinomies over-determined by pressures on the Montagnard revolutionaries who were having to distance themselves from, while at the same time still seeking to represent, the forces of popular revolution. David's discourse on revolutionary heroism was caught up in acute political contradictions that later radicals were no more able to resolve than the Jacobin revolutionaries. That his heavily invested images of the ideal revolutionary hero could only be imagined as male was one of its more insistent pathologies, which has continued to haunt subsequent libertarian projections of political regeneration and renewal.<sup>29</sup>

The rhetoric of David's speech, with its insistent yet unconscious intermingling of pathos and desire, of physical violence and sexualized pleasure, with its celebration of the heightened erotic charge of a male body that was simultaneously heroic and damaged, could be seen as having certain affinities with the tropes we identified in his image of Bara. There are significant differences, though, not least because the visual image blurs and perhaps even disturbs the rigidly gendered dualities the speech tries to

**28.** The passage occurs in David's famous speech to the Convention Nationale (11 July 1794) in which he set out plans for a festival (that never took place) according the boy heroes Bara and Viala the honours of the Pantheon (*La Mort de Bara*, p. 161).

**29.** On the larger politics involved, see D. Outram, 'The French Revolution, Modernity and the Body Politic' (note 17, pp. 153 ff.). For an alternative analysis of the sexual politics of the 'ideal' male nude in early nineteenth-century French art, see A. Solomon-Godeau, 'Male Trouble' (note 4).

reaffirm. The world of male heroics David tried to conjure up is perhaps closer to a somewhat later painting by him, *Leonidas at the Pass of Thermopylae* (Plate 43). This representation of an exclusively masculine imaginary world is one that categorically excludes the female figure from the arena of action of the 'free' male hero. The ideal male body takes over the whole panorama of ideal selfhood. He needs no female supplement, or only one that exists quite apart from the heroic male subject's testing ground. In its quasi-totalitarian monism, in its repressive projection of an exclusive masculinity, it might best be seen as the complement to another equally rigid masculine monism, the fantasy of an easeful world of female bodies available only as objects of desire. Ingres's *Turkish Bath* could be seen as the other side of the coin carrying David's *Leonidas*, equally charged by the libidinal and political economy of an extreme male bourgeois fantasy. On one hand there is a sensuous paradise of flawless eroticized passive female bodies, in which the presence of a virile figure would be a disturbing intrusion, and on the other the ideal world of a heroic and undivided self-sufficient manhood, from which femininity was by definition excluded. If the extreme gendering of these complementary male fantasies about enjoying and identifying with a finely formed body is symptomatic of a dislocation in definitions of male subjectivity in post-revolutionary society, it is one lodged at the centre of the tradition that made the two images possible.



43. J. L. David, *Leonidas at the Pass of Thermopylae*, oil, 1814, Louvre, Paris.

After the massive coherence of the *Leonidas*, its overbearing celebration of a heroic male subjectivity formed in violent struggle, we may wish to return to the relative ambivalence and incompleteness of the *Bara* (Plate 42). It is in a way the freer image,

leaving more space for varying projections of identity, anxiety, and desire, and it may not be entirely irrelevant that, in strictly historical terms, it is the product of a much more truly revolutionary moment.

It is also the more radically disturbing image, not just because its damaged body is so compelling a representation of the intractable tensions within the libertarian aspirations it seeks to embody. It also raises discomfiting questions about the pleasure we might take in the violence done to a beautifully desirable body. Years later, Oscar Wilde was to put this more nakedly, and with a new depth of self-awareness, when he said 'Yet each man kills the thing he loves.'<sup>30</sup>

## Modernity and its Discontents

Walter Pater's important early essay on Winckelmann<sup>31</sup> dating from 1867 offers a curiously ambivalent image of the Greek ideal:

The beauty of the Greek statues was a sexless beauty: the statues of the gods had the least trace of sex. Here there is a moral sexlessness, a kind of ineffectual wholeness of nature, yet with a true beauty and significance of its own.<sup>32</sup>

The slippage between ideas of 'wholeness of nature' and phrases suggesting lack —'ineffectual' and 'moral sexlessness'—reverberates throughout Pater's analysis of the Winckelmannian Greek ideal, an ideal that was for Pater simultaneously an icon of male self-fulfillment and a denial of the fuller resonances of the self. Exploring the workings of such paradoxes, however rooted they are in the particularities of British Victorian culture, do help to illuminate Winckelmann's project, for Pater was an unusually close and careful reader of *The History of the Art of Antiquity*. Like any good reader, Pater was

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30. Oscar Wilde, 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' (first published in 1898), Section I, in *Plays Prose Writings and Poems* (London, 1975), p. 404.

31. It was first published in 1867, and then reprinted in slightly modified form in his famous study of the Renaissance that came out in 1873. It is the latter version, as re-edited in a modern reprint of the 1910 text of *The Renaissance*, that is cited here. On the text of Pater's *Renaissance*, see the introduction to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, ed. D. L. Hill, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1980. This section is a much revised and considerably extended version of an article 'Walter Pater's Winckelmann' published in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 46, 1993, pp. 67–73.

32. Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 210–11. My reading of Pater's 'Imaginary Portrait' of Winckelmann owes a lot to Richard Dellamora's *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill and London, 1990). Partly inspired by Dellamora's insistence on the ambivalences of Pater's projections of male desire, however, I interpret the essay on Winckelmann as offering an inherently more problematized view of the pagan sensuality of Greek art than he does (see his chapter 5, 'Arnold, Winckelmann and Pater'). Other studies of Pater I found helpful in coming to terms with him include J. Hillis Miller, 'Walter Pater: A partial Portrait', in H. Bloom (ed.), *Walter Pater* (New York, 1985), and W. Iser, *Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment* (Cambridge, 1987).

also extremely partial, and his analysis was driven by preoccupations and disavowals that made him blind to important aspects of Winckelmann's writing, in particular to the eruptions of violent physical struggle that are supposedly **transcended by the most purified forms of the Greek ideal. These very blindnesses will help us to clarify precisely what it is that we now find so compelling in Winckelmann's work.**

Pater's essay on Winckelmann initially presents itself as the portrait of some supposedly simple other to the turbulent paradoxes of the modern. The epigraph *Et ego in arcadia fui* (I too was in Arcadia)<sup>33</sup> which introduces it, suggests the recreation of a lost utopian world, the whole youthful world of the ancient Greeks. But a troubling unease over a persistent threat of death is also intimated. The Greek Arcadia that Pater evokes is not just framed by death and dissolution. It is of itself insistently imbued with a disturbing absence, with what he calls 'a negative quality'.<sup>34</sup> Pater locates this both in Greek sculpture's 'colourless unclassified purity of life',<sup>35</sup> and in the absence of 'intoxication produced by shame or loss' with which Winckelmann handled 'the sensuous element in Greek art'.<sup>36</sup> While at one level the sensuous plenitude of the antique is being set against its absence in the modern world, lack, loss, and absence are also seen to reside within the very ideal being conjured up. Pater's Arcadian antiquity is not in any commonly accepted sense a culture replete with the wholeness of nature; rather it already contains 'a premonition of the fleshless, consumptive refinements of the pale, medieval artists'.<sup>37</sup>

The supposedly unperplexed realm of self-realization and freedom embodied in the Greek ideal thus reveals a disconcerting absence. Far from effecting a clear separation between classical, medieval, and modern apprehensions of the self, which might allow a stable perspective of the destabilizing dynamic of modernity, the distinguishing features of these different configurations bleed into one another in a disconcerting way. There is no clearly defined other to the anxieties and disturbances of the modern, nor to the denials of sensuous plenitude supposedly epitomized by the dark medieval world, from which the Hellenic ideal was traditionally seen as offering total liberation.

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33. On this nostalgic reading of the epithet 'Et in Arcadia ego', see E. Panofsky, '*Et in Arcadia Ego*: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition', in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp. 340–1.

34. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 211.

35. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 209.

36. Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 211–12.

37. Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 209, 213.



Pater's engagement with Winckelmann's Greek ideal is very different from the Davidian one, not only because the political dimension so important for the French revolutionaries is more or less absent. The politics in Pater is very much a politics of identity, which relates to an individual contemplative self rather than an active public one. But the whole nature of his involvement with Winckelmann is very different. Pater was concerned, not just with the Greek ideal, but also with the persona of Winckelmann as scholar and writer. Pater takes his place in a tradition of writers' and scholars' self-projections through Winckelmann, based on a reading of his letters and biography as well as his archaeological writings, which flourished among German writers in the generation or so after Winckelmann. The most famous and interesting instances are Herder's and Goethe's celebrations of Winckelmann, the latter being the starting-point for Pater's essay.<sup>38</sup> In these eulogies Winckelmann emerges as a peculiarly paradoxical figure—at one level, the new model of a man of letters who fashioned for his time a refurbished classical ideal, on the other the scholar who had been able to bring alive again the lost ideal of the ancient Greeks *because he was so unmodern, because at some level he embodied himself the very essence of the Hellenic ideal from which the modern world had become alienated. As Pater said, Winckelmann 'made himself a pagan for the purpose of penetrating antiquity'.*<sup>39</sup>

In the later nineteenth century there was another surge of re-identification with Winckelmann, which coincided with the major expansion of art-historical and archaeological studies in universities in Germany,<sup>40</sup> where Winckelmann functioned as heroic model and founding father. Justi's still famous intellectual biography of Winckelmann came out at almost the same time as Pater's.<sup>41</sup> It is more comprehensive and complete than Pater's, but it is in the end a simpler portrait, presenting Winckelmann as the exemplar of an admirable scholarly life and achievement, with which any respectable academic or man of letters could identify, not the site of vexed and vexing questions about art, subjectivity, and sexuality, as in Pater's essay. Pater also made a more intensely focused identification that gives his essay an urgency lacking in the more conventional humanist Winckelmann cult that flourished in the German-speaking world.

38. J. W. Goethe, 'Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert', in *Schriften zu Kunst*, vol. I (Munich, 1962), pp. 254–89. The essay was first published in 1805 in a book that included Winckelmann's letters to his friend Berendis, which are among his more explicitly homoerotic.

39. Pater (*Renaissance*, p. 188), quoting Madame de Staël.

40. See H. Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution*, pp. 237 ff.

41. C. Justi, *Winckelmann und seine Zeitgenossen*, first published in two volumes in 1866–72.

In contrast with his German contemporaries, Pater, as a British writer, was making in Winckelmann a very unusual choice of intellectual hero. Winckelmann's *History* first became available in English in a rather inaccessible American edition some ninety years after its initial publication, and only appeared in full in 1873, after Pater had written his essay, in the year when he republished it in *The Renaissance*<sup>42</sup> Winckelmann was no cultural icon of British literary or scholarly life, unlike Goethe, who was something of a hero figure among British Victorian intellectuals.<sup>43</sup> Goethe's famous essay on Winckelmann was indeed one very important stimulus for Pater. To some extent, Pater's analysis can be seen as a commentary on the image of Winckelmann fashioned by Goethe, in which Winckelmann's antique spirit had already been projected as a radical other to modernity. Pater sought to negotiate the complexities of Goethe's involvement with Winckelmann's supposedly ideal antique self—a distancing identification that both recognized the alienation of the antique from modern culture, while striving to incorporate it so as to give some centredness to the complexities and instabilities of the modern self.

But there is another more important point of engagement with Winckelmann that Pater makes quite explicit, the projection of Winckelmann as the ideal of a personal and intellectual identity based on male same-sex desire.<sup>44</sup> The Winckelmann essay was part of a larger project, which included an essay on Leonardo, and which 'begins to theorize a place for perverse sexual self-awareness in cultural formation and critique'.<sup>45</sup> If it would be somewhat anachronistic to envisage Pater as exploring what we would call a gay identity, we are with him nevertheless on the boundaries of a new modern consciousness of sexuality as playing a constitutive role in definitions of the self.

At several points in the essay Pater insists that the intensity of Winckelmann's engagement with the antique arose out of his erotically charged [relations with younger men, if in terms that are quite wilfully paradoxical: 'These friendships \[with young men\], bringing him into contact with the pride of human form, and staining the thoughts with its bloom, perfected his reconciliation to the spirit of Greek sculpture.'](#)<sup>46</sup> Also evident are

42. See Chapter I, note 4.

43. On the cult of Goethe in Victorian Britain, see Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800–1860* (Cambridge, 1980).

44. Pater's identification with Winckelmann would have been the stronger because of the Socratic educative role (on the importance of this 'Platonic' paradigm for male same-sex relations, see Chapter VI, note 2.) the latter played out in relation to some of the younger men to whom he addressed his more homoerotically charged letters. On the sexual politics of Pater's milieu, see R. Dellamora, *Masculine Desire* (note 32).

the limits to this projection of what we would call homosexual desire. With Pater, the question of male sexuality becomes an issue in a way that it could not have been in the eighteenth century, and so these limits have to be made more visible than in Winckelmann. In Pater's text there is an elision between suggestions of a limitation to the forms of desiring inherent in the Greek ideal—a 'moral sexlessness'—and references to the supposed 'sexlessness' of the erotically charged involvement with men cultivated by Winckelmann.

One key passage makes these ambiguities and tensions particularly apparent, the more so for being channelled through the highly wrought cadences of Pater's prose:

Certainly of that beauty of living form which regulated Winckelmann's friendships, it could not be said that it gave no pain. One notable friendship, the fortune of which we may trace through his letters, begins with an antique, chivalrous letter in French, and ends noisily in a burst of angry fire. Far from reaching the quietism, the bland indifference of art, such attachments are nevertheless more susceptible than any other of equal strength of a purely intellectual culture. Of passion, of physical excitement, they contain only just so much as stimulates the eye to the finest delicacies of colour and form. These friendships, often caprices of a moment, make Winckelmann's letters, with their troubled colouring, an instructive but bizarre addition to the *History of Art*, that shrine of grave and mellow light around the mute Olympian family.<sup>47</sup>

Winckelmann's male friendships are presented as a passionate and turbulent other to the 'quietism', 'the bland indifference' of the ideal art to which he devoted his intellectual life. But like the sensuality of the Greek ideal, the sensuality at play in these friendships in turn folds in on itself to become abstractly dematerialized. The connection Pater makes between Winckelmann's emotionally charged male friendships and the desexualized beauty of Greek art is not just by way of contrast, in which the turbulent passions of 'real life' frame the colourless indifference of a lost Apollonian ideal. In Pater's reading, these friendships were themselves characterized by a comparative absence of 'passion' and 'physical excitement'. Pater sets up a contrast between life and intellectual project, only to insist in the end on a continuity between the blockages to

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46. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 189.

47. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 191.

desire played out within the Greek ideal—that youthful beauty that ‘gives no pain, is without life’—and those blockages operating within the desexed sexualized persona he constructed around Winckelmann.

But Pater also talks about the passionate concentration of energy that fueled Winckelmann’s definition of the antique Greek ideal. This ‘passion, this temperament’ is seen as ‘nurtured and invigorated by friendships which kept him [always in direct contact with the spirit of youth](#)’.<sup>48</sup> Then the very next sentence effects a sudden and unconditional blocking of such desire: ‘The beauty of the Greek statues was a sexless beauty.’ The transition is too highly charged to be mediated. In other words, an imagined sensuous plenitude realized in male same-sex desire and an internalized social prohibition on living out such desire in Victorian England are incompatible, but nevertheless exist alongside one another as the very condition of the male subjectivity Pater was defining. As a vehicle for both imagining the fulfillment of a fantasy and registering the reality of the threats and fears blocking this fantasy, the Greek ideal is caught up in a psychic dynamic we might describe in Freud’s words as a ‘splitting of the ego in the process of defence’.<sup>49</sup>

The moment of rupture in Pater’s text results in a reassessment of Winckelmann’s Hellenic ideal which almost overturns his earlier celebrations of the ‘force and glow’ and ‘enthusiasm’, the ‘unexpressed pulsation of life’ in Winckelmann’s writing, and the ‘emancipation’ it provided from the ‘repression’ of the dark barbarous world Winckelmann inhabited.<sup>50</sup> Now the very quality that Goethe had identified as the ethical essence of Winckelmann’s Hellenism is seen by Pater as imbued with lack. The ‘serenity (*Heiterkeit*) which characterizes Winckelmann’s handling of the sensuous side of Greek art. . . is, perhaps, in great measure, a negative quality.’ Negative in that desire as we know it in the modern world, desire in all its disturbing complexity has no place. There is none of the ‘intoxication’ inextricably bound up with a modern ‘sense of shame or loss’. There is harmony, but it is achieved through excluding or ignoring the psychic ‘conflict’ whose intensity ‘makes the blood turbid, and frets the flesh, and discredits the world about us’.<sup>51</sup> The Hellenic ideal cultivated by Winckelmann, which seemed to promise a wholeness of self integrated with its desires, could only in Pater’s view do this at the cost of excluding the fullest, if painfully contradictory, resonances of modern desire.

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48. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 210.

49. [See Chapter V, note 65.](#)

50. Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 183–4.

51. Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 211–12.

Winckelmann's Greek ideal is not only innocent of the richer, more disturbing antinomies of desiring. It is so constituted as to exclude 'an intoxication' of passion. At this point Pater's most negative image of Winckelmann's project emerges, an image that exists uneasily alongside his libertarian projection of Winckelmann's ideal as one where again 'the lost proportions of life right themselves'.<sup>52</sup>

his insight into the typical unity and repose of the highest sort of sculpture seems to have involved limitation in another direction. His conception of art excludes that bolder type of it which deals confidently and serenely with life, conflict, evil. Living in a world of exquisite but abstract and colourless form, he could hardly have conceived of the subtle and penetrative, yet somewhat grotesque art of the modern world.<sup>53</sup>

For Pater, Winckelmann's world lacks a (burdening) consciousness of the antinomies of the desire it speaks. In his reading, it is our modern consciousness that invests Winckelmann's discourse on the erotic charge of the youthful male body with a richness that was not to be had in Winckelmann's pre-modern intellectual and imaginative world. We are the ones who discover the 'joy of finding the ideal of that youth still red with life in the grave', not Winckelmann.<sup>54</sup>

Pater was living at a time when modern notions of sexuality were just beginning to be defined. Indeed we might see him as one of the pioneers of that distinctively modern preoccupation with the formative role of sexual desire in the constitution of the self, which was later taken up in psychoanalytic theory. Pater identified with Winckelmann as a man who was still able to fabricate a compelling image of erotic manhood, and do it, in his view, largely unselfconsciously. Pater could not publicly speak his own 'homosexual' desire except by way of what he saw as the as yet 'unsexualized' image of youthful 'Greek' masculinity he discovered in Winckelmann. But he was also acutely aware that the apparent undisturbed calm of this image blocked the definition of his own desire in all its complex (in)sufficiency.<sup>55</sup>

The limits Pater identified in Winckelmann's Hellenism also have to do with a politics of gender. His Greek ideal presents an exclusively masculine world where a whole male

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52. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 184.

53. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 212.

54. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 202.

55. On the contradictory dynamic at work in the definition and new self-consciousness about homosexuality in the late nineteenth century, see Chapter IV, note 27.



self is in effect constituted through the exclusion of any resonant suggestions of femininity. According to Pater, Winckelmann's world is one 'represented by that group of brilliant youths in *Lysis*'.<sup>56</sup> The Greek ideal, 'purged from the angry, bloodlike stains of action and passion, reveals, not what is accidental in *man*, but the tranquil godship in him . . . [it] records the first naïve, unperplexed recognition of *man* by himself (Plate 44).'<sup>57</sup> In this passage there is an insistence on man that carries with it an accent of 'not woman' absent in Winckelmann. A further passage hints at something more explicit in this connection. When Pater talks about the limited range of states of mind and attitude in Greek art, his evidence is that 'there is no Greek Madonna; the goddesses are always childless.'<sup>58</sup>



44. Westmacott Athlete, marble, British Museum, London.

These relatively marginal comments on the absence of femininity in the Greek ideal take on a different cast when read in conjunction with what Pater says in his contemporary essay on Leonardo. Leonardo functioned for him as the embodiment of a resonantly modern subjectivity. A rather more richly articulated male identity is projected in this context through identification with the feminine;<sup>59</sup> the painting of Mona

<sup>56</sup> Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 182. I am grateful to Caroline Arscott's comments for help in clarifying this analysis.

<sup>57</sup> Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 205 (my underlining). The statue illustrated in Plate 44 is a Roman copy based on a classic Greek prototype of about 440 BC. It was acquired by the British Museum in 1857.

<sup>58</sup> Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 208.

<sup>59</sup> See Dellamora, *Masculine Desire* (note 32), pp. 144–6.

Lisa makes manifest the depth and range of Leonardo's rich sense of self, and also exposes a major absence in the Hellenic ideal:

It [the figure of Mona Lisa] is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed.<sup>60</sup>

Mona Lisa is gendered in this passage as 'it' rather than 'she', not so much a woman, but a figure that suggests those resonances and antinomies of (male) desire which, in the context of nineteenth-century European culture, were so often projected through the image of the female body. The subjectivity intimated by the *Mona Lisa*, and with which we as readers are invited to identify, is the 'embodiment' of 'an idea of humanity . . . wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life . . . the symbol of the modern idea'. For Pater, what is missing in Winckelmann's image of the (male) self is such a (feminine) supplement. Leonardo's all-encompassing sense of self contrasts with Winckelmann's purified and simplified image of 'man'. Pater's identifying this lack in the ideal image of masculinity offered by Winckelmann is all the more forceful because it is informed by a vivid awareness of such an image's compulsive fascination for a male viewer, whether gay or heterosexual.

When Pater elaborates on the distinctive qualities of the purest Greek ideal, he follows Winckelmann very closely. His evocation of 'This colourless, unclassified purity of life'<sup>61</sup> in Greek sculpture picks up directly on imagery used by Winckelmann, as in the passage describing the attenuated forms of the most ideal beauty as analogous to the pure tasteless water from a spring.<sup>62</sup> The echoes of Winckelmann are at times very close indeed:

Greek sculpture deals almost exclusively with youth, where the moulding of the bodily organs is still as if suspended between growth and completion, indicated but not emphasized; where the transition from curve to curve is so delicate and elusive, that Winckelmann compares it to a quiet sea, which,

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60. Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 122–3.

61. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 209.

62. *Geschichte*, p. 151.

although we understand it to be in motion, we nevertheless regard as an image of repose.<sup>63</sup>

If we look at the corresponding passage in Winckelmann, however, there is an important difference:

A beautiful youthful physique is made up of such forms [forms unified by an imperceptible flowing of one into the other], like the unified flat expanses of the sea, that from a distance appears smooth and still, like a mirror, though it is in incessant movement, and rolls in waves. *[Ein schönes jugendliches Gewächs aus solcher Formen gebildet ist, wie die Einheit der Fläche des Meers, welche in einiger Weite eben und stille, wie ein Spiegel, erscheint, ob es gleich allezeit in Bewegung ist, und Wogen wälzet.]*<sup>64</sup>

Pater's rhetoric produces a liminal space where the dynamic of life is simultaneously intimated and suspended. With Winckelmann, the purifying of potential disturbance is effected in a prose that is not itself so immaculately modulated. Rather it shifts constantly between an apparent affirmation and a denial of sensuous immediacy and vitality. If we consider the overall picture of the Greek ideal that Pater extracts from Winckelmann, we see echoed something of the effect of stilled vitality evident in the passage by him quoted here.

Pater focuses quite exclusively on one particular part of Winckelmann's *History*, namely the theoretical discussion of ideal beauty, and precisely on those sections of it concerned with expunging traces of identity and feeling [that might disturb the perfect youthful ideal of self-sufficient oneness](#). Winckelmann's analysis is both taken at its word and at the same time given a very different inflection, not just through the purifying presentation of the more rarefied aspects of Winckelmann's Greek ideal, but through the systematic exclusion from the domain of Greek art of any potential disturbance to this ideal. In Pater, [the supplement to the Greek ideal's absolute serenity, namely the stains of passion, the darker complexities of desire, are systematically drained off from the Greek world and projected onto the modern.](#)<sup>65</sup> In Winckelmann, in contrast, the disturbances expunged from the highest model of the Greek ideal are played out elsewhere in his

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63. Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 208–9.

64. *Geschichte*, pp. 152–3.

65. Pater (*Renaissance*, p. 212) does indicate that there is some suggestion of this in Greek tragedy, and even in pastoral poetry. Like most historians and theorists of culture in the nineteenth century, following in the wake of Hegel (see also Chapter V, note 74), Pater envisaged Greek sculpture as the essence of the Greek ideal in its most purified form.

presentation of Greek art and culture—in the struggles and conflicts marking out the material history of Greek art, and more vividly in the ‘unconscious’ eruptions of violence and struggle in his reading of statues such as the Laocoön. Greek art in the end encompasses both narcissistic solipsism and its other, violent sado-masochistic confrontation and struggle. In Pater’s reading of the Greek ideal, this ‘unconscious’ is more systematically repressed, but its effects are insistently there in the acute intimations of death suffusing his images of ‘untroubled’ Greek youth.

In Pater, much more evidently and disturbingly than in Winckelmann, the image of ideal youth is split between an affirmation and a negation of the self. ‘Everywhere there is the effect of an awakening, of a child’s sleep just disturbed,’ Pater writes of the Greek ideal.<sup>66</sup> But the intimations of life awakening are drained away as ‘the supreme and colourless abstraction’ of the Greek ideal, ‘the secret of their (the Olympian gods’) repose’, is taken to its logical conclusion. ‘That high indifference to the outward, that impassivity, has already a touch of the corpse in it.’<sup>67</sup> The expunging of signs of ‘anger, or desire, or surprise’ produces an ‘impassivity’ that borders on ‘insipidity’—that is, the antithesis of the grotesque expression of those deformed by the ‘sharp impress of one absorbing motive, from which it is said death sets their features free’.<sup>68</sup> With Pater, the ultimate logic of the Greek ideal, the Nirvana it seems to promise, comes very close to Freud’s conception of ‘the death instincts, whose aim is to conduct the restlessness of life into the stability of the inorganic state’.<sup>69</sup>

It is striking how, in Pater, the question of passion and its denial becomes a focus of intense anxiety in a way which it was not in Winckelmann. This anxiety centres on the image of blood. Blood, its redness, is the embodiment of bodily vitality that is drained from the Greek ideal.<sup>70</sup> Equally it is a stain, a sign of some disavowed horror. The Greek ideal, according to Pater, has to be ‘purged from the angry, bloodlike stains of action and passion’. The connotations attaching to blood as both life-giving warmth and trace of violence and pain resonate in the word ‘stain’ used to describe Winckelmann’s ‘romantic, fervent friendships with young men . . . friendships, bringing him into contact with the

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66. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 209.

67. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 209.

68. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 207.

69. Freud, ‘The Economic Problem of Masochism’ (1924), *Freud Library*, vol. 11, p. 414. This was a recurrent motif in Pater. Thus, in his imaginary portrait of a man who sought to find a measure of serenity in complete self-sufficient isolation, he wrote ‘one’s wisdom, therefore consists in hastening, so far as may be, the action of those forces which tend to the restoration of equilibrium, to the calm surface of the absolute, untroubled mind, to *tabula rasa*, by the extinction in one’s self of all that is but the correlative to the finite illusion—by suppression of ourselves’ (*Imaginary Portraits* (London, 1887), p. 123).

70. See, for example, the passage quoted earlier, note 57.

pride of human form, and staining the thoughts with its bloom.’ Blood too stains the image of Winckelmann’s death, the murder whose terrifying and gratuitous violence Pater both registers and seeks to evade. If Pater follows Goethe in seeing it as ‘a death which, for its swiftness and its opportunity, he [Winckelmann] might well have desired’, it is too disturbing to be fully rationalized in this way. In the abrupt space of two sentences, Pater moves from the image of a blood-soaked Winckelmann ‘dangerously wounded’, to that of him in the memory of posterity ‘eternally able and strong’. Winckelmann’s death is made to repeat the duality of deadly fatality and utopian self-realization that troubled and fascinated Pater in the Greek ideal.<sup>71</sup>

The stain of blood, then, is both a supplement that sustains the bloodless Greek ideal, but equally a source of anxiety from which it must be purged. The white light that Pater sees as the essence of the Greek ideal, which bleaches out both the vitality of blood-redness and the ‘stain’ of angry passion, is, like the contour in Winckelmann’s account, the visual emblem of the fetishistic aspect of the Greek ideal. But it is more immediately evocative of psychic anxiety because of the way Pater associates it with the highly charged image of blood. In a later essay on the athletic ideal, the one embodiment of ‘exquisite pain, alike of body and soul’ Pater identifies in Greek art is a statue of ‘the would-be virile Amazon’ (Plates 45, 46). The Wounded Amazon<sup>72</sup> is an exceptional image in which blood literally erupts onto the ‘white’ surface of the marble Roman copy. It is hardly surprising, given the gendered stereotypes available to Pater, that a female figure should be enlisted to suggest the confluence of bodily pain and vital warmth he associates with blood; nor that it should be the figure of a woman—the potential source of menstrual blood—where vital bodily fluids appear that the Greek ideal usually expunged, thereby allaying the disturbing fascination and disgust excited by these in male fantasy. But equally femininity is conjured up by Pater here to make up for a lack within available images of masculinity. A female figure is needed to supplement a purified masculine ideal, which in Pater’s world was prohibited from being desired too warmly, and only able to realize a mirage of integrity and serenity by repressing the richer resonances of male anxiety and desire.

71. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 193.

72. W. Pater, ‘The Age of Athletic Prizemen’ (1894), in *Greek Studies: a series of essays* (London, 1899), p. 316. The Roman copy illustrated in [plates 45–6](#), that derives from the early classical so-called ‘Sciarra’ type (see M. Robertson, *A History of Greek Art* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 335 ff.), is one where the wound is particularly in evidence. The famous Dying Gaul in the Capitoline Museum is among the very few surviving ‘Greek’ male nudes displaying an obvious wound, and significantly it does not represent a hero or an athlete but a defeated barbarian.





45. Wounded Amazon, marble, Metropolitan Museum, New York.



46. Wounded Amazon, detail of torso.

For Pater, a kind of deathliness pervades the Greek ideal. Indeed he quite explicitly characterizes the modern fascination with it as having something of a fascination with death. The modern imagination dwells on the antique world so insistently partly because it 'has passed away . . . What sharpness and reality it has is the sharpness and reality of

suddenly arrested life.<sup>73</sup> It is in their death that the clarity of these ideal youthful forms comes into focus, and the intense pleasure that they give is the pleasure of (re)discovering that 'ideal of youth still red with life in the grave'. Here a certain unavowed sadism emerges that we might see as, among other things, an internalization of the largely unspoken 'homophobia' in Victorian culture, from whose violent prohibitions the Greek ideal might seem to be but could not fully offer an escape.

To sum up, then, the smoothing out and purifying of the Greek ideal is taken by Pater to the point where, in contrast with Winckelmann, it cannot but be seen as registering a lack and an unease. Pater took the fetishizing logic of the Greek ideal further than Winckelmann, and in doing so also registered more [explicitly the psychic disavowals its image of undisturbed plenitude entailed. In his account, the Greek ideal could only function as a relatively 'safe' focus of male fantasy if it visibly blocked the more complex resonances of male desire.](#)<sup>74</sup>

Pater also registers a self-consciousness over the limits framing the Greek ideal at another quite different level, which had to do with the material form it took as a sculptural object. It is striking how in Winckelmann, the materiality of the antique nude seems to have so little to do with its materiality as a work of art. The physical sensuous aspect of a sculpture is defined almost exclusively in terms of the body it represents, rather than the literal substance of the sculptural object itself, even though the formal representational nature of the ideal figure is clearly registered in his conception of contour.

With Pater something else enters in. The objectness of sculpture becomes a problem, and a troubling disparity opens up between the reified thing-like quality of the sculpture as material object and the living ideal it supposedly embodies. This could not have been a problem for Winckelmann in the same way. A self-consciousness about the reifying effects of the art object was not yet an issue in eighteenth-century artistic culture. Signs of it begin to occur in some discussions of sculpture later in the eighteenth century, and

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73. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 202.

74. John Addington Symonds's much more explicit discussion of homosexual desire in Greek culture (*A Problem in Greek Ethics* (London, 1908)), written in 1873, could not be published in the normal way, and only appeared in a very limited private edition in 1883. Any attempt on our part to represent the complex structures of disavowal and affirmation of homosexual desire in a writer such as Pater is well described by Jonathan Dollimore's comment (*Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (London, 1991), p. 31) about how, in declaring 'either the absence of homosexuality or its (repressed) presence, plausible argument proceeds inseparably from questionable disavowal, inheriting the history of homosexuality's paradoxical, incoherent construction. Put another way, the disavowals are now as much a part of the history of homosexuality's actual absence as well of its presence, overt or repressed.'

are certainly there in Hegel, on whom Pater draws quite extensively. But it is only towards the middle of the nineteenth century that the idea takes hold in discussion of the visual arts that a truly modern living art should not present itself to the spectator too insistently as a static object or thing. It is at this moment that the materiality of the object of representation becomes a problem within modern artistic culture, as art is called upon to figure forth some alternative to reification, to the reduction of culture to a system of exchangeable commodities.<sup>75</sup>

When Pater defined the Greek ideal as trapped within the confines of a sculptural mode of representation, he was in part following a Romantic tradition of defining different art forms as appropriate to different phases in the historical development of human culture. Sculpture was the art of the ideal childhood of humanity realized by the ancient Greeks, when a full human subjectivity could still convincingly be embodied in the sensuous forms of a beautiful figure. Modern subjectivity, in contrast, had expanded beyond these confines to the point where an image of the body could only be an inadequate expression of inner being. Modern sensibility manifested itself pre-eminently in art forms that were allusive and not so insistently bound up with their literal materiality as sculpture, namely in painting and above all in poetry and music. These art forms, according to Pater, 'through their gradations of shade, their exquisite intervals . . . project in an external form that which is most inward in passion or sentiment'.<sup>76</sup>

The lack or limit involved in the Greek sculptural ideal is made more acute in Pater than in earlier Romantic aesthetics. It is not merely that the sculptural ideal could only embody a subjectivity that had not yet developed its richest and more troubling potential. Fashioning a human figure in the form of a solid object itself came to be seen as inherently problematic. For Pater, the formal exigencies of sculpture required a reification of the human subjectivity being represented or, to put it more in his terms, a presentation of the figure from which all obvious traces of feeling were removed, those passing states of consciousness central to the constitution of the modern self. A sculpture could only be convincing if it were a simplified image of the human self, an embodiment of its original but relatively empty essence, which did not attempt to render the nuances of human feeling that were the province of other more dematerialized art forms.

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<sup>75</sup>. For further discussion see Potts, 'Male Phantasy and Modern Sculpture', *Oxford Art Journal*, 15, no. 2, 1992, pp. 39, 44–5.

<sup>76</sup>. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 203.

As Pater said:

at first sight sculpture, with its solidity of form, seems a thing more real and full than the faint abstract world of poetry or painting. Still the fact is the reverse. Discourse and action show man as he is, more directly than the play of muscles and the moulding of the flesh; and over these poetry has command. Painting, by the flushing of colour in the face and dilation of light in the eye—music, by its subtle range of tones—can refine most delicately upon a single moment of passion, unravelling its subtlest threads.<sup>77</sup>

Sculpture, confined within the limits of pure form, purges out the vivid richness of sensuous life associated with colour and tone, those aspects of the body that we most readily read as intimations of expression and feeling.<sup>78</sup> At one level there is oneness and simplicity: 'the art of sculpture records the first naïve, unperplexed recognition of man by himself.' At another this sculptural ideal represents a denial of the living signs of selfhood.

The obdurate materiality of sculpture, as Pater explains more fully in a slightly later essay on Luca della Robbia, completed in 1872,<sup>79</sup> is a limitation it must confront by way of radical contradiction. Greek art could only achieve its aims by, on one hand, reducing the human figure to pure form, and yet on the other seeking to block recognition of this reduction, by creating an image that would not invite comparison between a living feeling self and 'the hardness and unspirituality of pure form' inherent in the positivity of sculpture. A sculpture must not directly echo the vital forms of a body in nature, but instead conjure up an abstract structure, purged of individuality and expression, which if fixed would expose the sculptural object as the dead and lifeless thing it was. The sculptural body, if it is not to appear rigidly unlikelike, has to present itself as purged of life: 'In this way their [the Greeks'] works came to be like some subtle extract or essence, or almost like pure thoughts or ideas: and hence the breadth of humanity in them.'<sup>80</sup> We could recast Pater's analysis here to say that this sculptural form is a little like the commodity—just a thing on one hand, but on the other existing as an element within the

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77. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 204.

78. Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 204–5.

79. This essay was included with the one on Winckelmann in *Studies in the Renaissance*. See Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 79–81.

80. This quasi-modernist focus on the physical fabric of artistic representation, as distinct from a more traditional concern with the sensuous qualities associated with the motif being represented, involved conceptualizing a work of art so that it would both be true to and at the same time overcome the limits of its literal materiality. Such concerns first properly took shape in the later nineteenth century, and clearly separate Pater's analysis of Greek sculpture from Winckelmann's. On the specific problems these changes raised for sculptural aesthetics, see A. Potts, 'Male Phantasy' (note 75).

dematerializing system of exchange values that provide the framework for modern apprehensions of the material object, something totally immaterial and abstract. At the very least we have in Pater a theorist working within a new cultural formation for which object and thing in their raw materiality had become problematic in ways that they were not before.

There is one further important issue that Pater raises when he seeks to define [the limits of Winckelmann's Greek ideal. It too concerns definitions of identity, but this time more political than psychic in nature. In a crucial passage where he distances himself from the ideological configuration of Winckelmann's world, Pater defines the modernity separating him from Winckelmann as producing, not just a richer contemplative self-consciousness, but also a dissolution of the self as effective agent within the 'real' world:](#)

That naïve, rough sense of freedom, which supposes man's will to be limited, if at all, only by a will stronger than his, he can never have again . . . For us necessity is not, as of old, a sort of mythological personage without us, with whom we can do warfare. It is rather a magic web woven through and through us, like that magnetic system of which modern science speaks, penetrating us with a network, subtler than our subtlest nerves, yet bearing in it the central forces of the world.<sup>81</sup>

Or, to take another passage from the conclusion to the *Renaissance*:

That clear perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them (the forces of physical life that flow through us from the world outside)—a design in a web, the actual thread of which passes out beyond it.<sup>82</sup>

In getting at the sense of these passages, we are perhaps hampered by an all too ready recognition of echoes of post-modern ideas on the death of the traditional centred subject. We could easily draw out a web of analogies with such orthodoxies of present-day critical theory as the Lacanian notion of identity being constituted in lack and fragmentation. We should not be wrong to do so. Now we have post-modernism, it pervades our sense of what it means to be modern. Certainly we would be justified in

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<sup>81</sup>. Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 218.

<sup>82</sup>. *Renaissance*, pp. 220–1. That this conclusion was left out of the second edition of 1877 would indicate that Pater was sensitive as to the controversial constructions that might be put on his aestheticism. But it is not at all clear that the problems had to do with any too overt suggestions of homoerotic desire. If this had been the case, the Winckelmann essay would probably have been the section to cut. For a fuller discussion, see Dellamora (note 32), chapter 8.



recognizing elements of a distinctively 'post-modern' anxiety about the self in the 'modern' culture of the late nineteenth century, above all about the self as a psychic entity constituted through desire and fantasy. Much could be gained no doubt by examining Pater from this perspective, if only to remind ourselves that fantasies about the dissolution of the self are often bound up with reifying fantasies about the individual self as a substantive self-sufficient entity. Pater comes to his 'postmodern' conclusion at the end of a long essay analysing his fascination with the emblem *par excellence* of centred human subjectivity, the ideal classical nude, which he deconstructs in the very act of purifying its claims to represent a deproblematized integrity of self.

If we are to understand what is at stake in Pater's distancing from Winckelmann, it is not just the dissolution of the self as such. Pater's projection of an ideal modern subjectivity, no less or more than Winckelmann's 'archaic' ideal of subjective serenity, was bound up with fantasies and fears of self-annihilation. Also at issue is Pater's attempt to render redundant the more violent contradictions inherent in Winckelmann's notion of a free sovereign subjectivity. Pater seeks a definition of individual consciousness that effaces [any suggestion of confrontation between it and the world around it. It is only here, where he is so explicit about the ideological discrepancy between his and Winckelmann's constitution of self, that it seems possible for him to signal the conflicts so powerfully articulated at moments within Winckelmann's account of the Greek ideal. When Pater talks of Winckelmann's sense of 'freedom' as realized in a 'warfare' between ourselves and 'a sort of mythological personage without us', we have one of the few places in the essay where, for example, the conflicts acted out by the struggling Laocoön or the annihilated Niobe come to mind.](#)

Pater's conception of individual consciousness negotiates a powerful anxiety concerning the threats anathematizing sexualized relations between men in the society he inhabited—threats that had become a more pressing issue in Victorian Britain than they could have been for Winckelmann.<sup>83</sup> But the fantasy of abolishing the self as any kind of active force in the 'real' world also had other political reverberations. In constituting a new identity that precluded any possibility of confrontation with the larger material forces moulding it, Pater categorically rejected as archaic or naïvely unselfconscious the idea of self as political agent.

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83. See earlier notes 44 and 74.

Pater's appropriation of Winckelmann's Greek ideal focuses on the image of a solipsistic enjoyment of self, a self existing in a narcissistic limbo where there is no disturbance of desire, and whose 'ineffectual wholeness of nature' Pater seeks to move beyond, but cannot quite.<sup>84</sup> The supplement to this in Winckelmann, the active subject in violent confrontation with the world around it, and its historical echo in struggles against tyranny and oppression, which according to Winckelmann activated the spirit of freedom integral to the Greek ideal, is insistently repressed in Pater. But this repression brings into focus precisely what makes Winckelmann such an unusually fascinating and politically resonant figure—his desire to fuse a voluptuary aestheticism with the 'naïve, rough sense of freedom' which so disturbed Pater.

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1 J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* (London, 1988), pp. 111–14. »

2 This section is a considerably revised version of a paper, 'De Winckelmann à David: la figuration visuelle des idéaux politiques', given at a symposium *David contre David* in Paris in 1989 and published in *History Workshop Journal* (Oxford University Press), no. 30, 1990, pp. 1–21, under the title 'Beautiful Bodies and Dying Heroes'. »

3 On the political resonances of 'high' art supposedly informed by the values of the antique in late eighteenth-century France see [T. E. Crow, \*Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century France\* \(New Haven and London, 1985\)](#), and R. Michel, 'L'Art des Salons', in P. Bordes and R. Michel, *Aux armes et aux arts: les arts de la Révolution 1789–1799* (Paris, 1988). »

4 E. J. Delécluze, *Louis David: son école et son temps* (Paris, 1855), pp. 120, 218 ff.; and also M. Fried, 'Thomas Couture and the Theatricalization of Action in Nineteenth Century French Painting', *Artforum*, June 1970, p. 41. Discussions of the aesthetic and political resonances of the new more sensuous and 'beautiful' conception of the male nude in Davidian painting of the 1790s that I found particularly helpful when elaborating this analysis were R. Michel, 'Bara: Du Martyr à l'Ephèbe', in *La Mort de Bara*, pp. 67 ff., W. Olander, *Pour Transmettre à la Postérité: French Painting and Revolution* (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1983), particularly pp. 295 ff., and a lecture by T. Crow given in London in 1988, a version of which was published under

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84. A slightly different perspective on Pater's conception of the Greek ideal in art is developed in my later article 'Walter Pater's unsettling of the Apollonian ideal' in M. Biddiss and M. Wyke (eds.), *The Uses and Abuses of Antiquity* (Bern, 1999), pp. 107–26.

homoeroticism in French Neoclassical painting of the 1790s and early 1800s; see W. Davis, 'Homoeroticism and Revolutionary Reason in Girodet's *Endymion* (lecture, 1993), A. Solomon-Godeau, 'Male Trouble: a Crisis in Representation', *Art History*, 16, 1993, pp. 286–312, and C. Ockman, 'Profiling Homoeroticism: Ingres' Achilles Receiving the Ambassadors of Agamemnon, *Art Bulletin*, 75, 1993, pp. 259–74. »

5 A. Détournelle, *Aux armes et aux arts: peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure: Journal de la Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts* (Paris [1794]), p. 169; the journal records the proceedings of the Société between February and May 1794. The celebration of Winckelmann occurs in a report drawn up by Détournelle on a private collection of casts of famous antique statues that the Société was negotiating to make available to young artists in order to encourage study of the antique. The quote on *contours mâles* comes from the announcement for a competition for a monument to the French people on the Isle de Paris. The Société Populaire, which described itself as made up of 'free men who have made an oath . . . only to exercise their genius to celebrate republican virtues' (Détournelle, p. 3), had been established as a radical republican alternative to the recently abolished French Royal Academy. »

6 On the reception of Winckelmann's writings in France, see E. Pommier, 'Winckelmann et la vision de L'Antiquité classique dans la France des Lumières et de la Révolution', *Revue de L'Art*, 83, 1989, pp. 9ff., and also Potts, 'Political Attitudes', pp. 200 ff. »

7 *Geschichte*, p. 316. On Winckelmann's conception of Greek freedom, see pp. 54 ff. »

8 In the early years of the Revolution, it was widely claimed that political freedom would of itself spontaneously give rise to a rejuvenated public art without the need for state intervention; see, for example, the pamphlet by H. J. Jansen, Winckelmann's translator, *Projet tendant à conserver les arts en France, en immortalisant les événemens patriotiques et les citoyens illustres* (Paris, 1791). Such libertarianism soon gave way to a renewed concern with propagating a 'correct' artistic doctrine. Particularly after Thermidor, the view began to take a hold that official government intervention [would be required to encourage the arts](#) (see E. Pommier, *L'Art et la Liberté: doctrines et débats de la Révolution* (Paris, 1990), pp. 250 ff.). »

9 A. Détournelle, *Aux armes et aux arts* (Paris [1794]), particularly pp. 158–79. »

descriptions of the sensuous beauties of famous statues, without negotiating a transition between the two (see, for example, *Aux armes . . .* (note 4), pp. 158 and 161). »

**12** See Chapter IV, note 19. »

**13** Vivant Denon, *Discours sur les monuments d'antiquité arrivés d'Italie prononcé le 8 vendémiaire an XII à la séance publique de la classe des beaux arts de l'Institut National* (Paris [1804]), pp. 19–20. The passage in quotes paraphrases a passage from Winckelmann's description of the Apollo Belvedere (*Geschichte*, p. 393). »

**14** When the tide turned in the years around 1800 towards a more academic view of the 'ideal beauty' of antique statuary, Winckelmann's highly charged celebrations of the Greek ideal were often criticized for their excessive enthusiasm (see, for example, N. Ponce, *Mémoire sur cette question proposée par l'Institut National: quelles ont été les causes de la perfection de la sculpture antique, et quels seroient les moyens d'y atteindre?* (Paris, an IX (1801)), pp. 40ff., and T. B. Eméric-David, *Recherches sur l'art statuaire . . .* (Paris, 1805), p. 278. These attacks on Winckelmann were ostensibly directed against the implication that the finest ancient art represented an almost unattainable ideal. It also seems, however, that his vivid evocations of antique beauty brought to the fore desires and fantasies deemed inappropriate to the professional scholarly discourse then coming into fashion. »

**15** P. Chaussard, *Sur le tableau des Sabines s par David* (Paris, 1800), pp. 7–8. »

**16** *Geschichte*, pp. 167–8. »

**17** For a discussion of the emphatically male gendering of the ideal subject during the years of the French Revolution, see Dorinda Outram's *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class and Political Culture* (New Haven and London, 1989). Outram's book (see particularly pp. 48 ff., 81 ff., 94 ff.), as well as Carol Duncan's important article on the vicissitudes and eventual revival of the heroic male in French painting of the later eighteenth century ('Fallen Fathers: Images of Authority in Pre-Revolutionary French Art', *Art History*, 4, June 1981, particularly pp. 198 ff.), played a major part in the genesis of the ideas developed here. »

**18** Chaussard, *Sabines*, p. 17. »

**19** See references in note 22. »

**20** For references see note 25. »

**22** For the most fully argued case that the naked figure of Bara was conceived, not as an erotic image, but as an abstract representation of heroic virtue—that in other words its nudity makes it into a Neoclassical allegory conveying an ‘ideal’ political message—see R. Michel, ‘Bara’ in *La Mort de Bara*, pp. 66 ff. In contrast, the late William Olander’s fine analysis of the painting in his unpublished dissertation *Pour transmettre à la postérité* (note 4, pp. 295–302) takes a view similar to that developed in this study, namely that the sexuality of the figure works to heighten its pathos as a mythic image of uncorrupted revolutionary man sacrificed in the highest cause. The painting was one that must have had a particular significance for David. According to his pupil Delécluze (*Louis David*, 1855, pp. 19–20; see also *La Mort de Bara*, p. 18), it was prominently displayed in the painter’s studio in the late 1790s along with the *Oath of the Horatii* and *Brutus*. The erotic charge of the dying youth, as Olander has pointed out, was underlined in an interesting way by David’s early biographer, Alexandre Lenoir, who saw it as echoing the figure of the beautiful boy and lover of Apollo, Hyacinth, killed accidentally by a quoit thrown by the god (‘Mémoires, David, Souvenirs Historiques’, *Journal de l’Institut Historique*, III, 1835, p. 6). »

**23** See pp. 179 ff. »

**24** *La Mort de Bara*, 1989 (note 3), p. 175. »

**25** Quoted in *La Mort de Bara*, 1989, p. 143. See W. Olander (note 22, pp. 295 ff.) for a discussion of how the distinctive symbolic charge of David’s image of the boy hero Bara tied in with the exigencies of Jacobin political ideology at this moment during the Terror. »

**26** Desmarres reported how Bara died refusing to give up the two horses that were in his charge. Robespierre’s dramatizing of Bara’s dying words occurred in a speech made to the Convention on 28 December 1793. General Desmarres’s letter was read out to the Convention Nationale on 10 January 1794 (See *La Mort de Bara*, pp. 142–3). On the invention of the cult of the boy hero Bara, see Jean-Clément Martin, ‘Bara: de l’imaginaire révolutionnaire à la mémoire nationale’ (in *La Mort de Bara*), and also J. C. Sloane’s pioneering article, ‘David, Robespierre and the Death of Bara’, *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, LXXIV, 1969, pp. 143 ff. »

**27** The passage comes from Robespierre’s speech to the Convention Nationale on 7 May 1794 (*La Mort de Bara*, p. 148). For a recent discussion of Jacques-René Hébert and the abrasively populist rhetoric of his famous revolutionary paper *Le Père*



Viala the honours of the Pantheon (*La Mort de Bara*, p. 161). »

**29** On the larger politics involved, see D. Outram, 'The French Revolution, Modernity and the Body Politic' (note 17, pp. 153 ff.). For an alternative analysis of the sexual politics of the 'ideal' male nude in early nineteenth-century French art, see A. Solomon-Godeau, 'Male Trouble' (note 4). »

**30** Oscar Wilde, 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' (first published in 1898), Section I, in *Plays Prose Writings and Poems* (London, 1975), p. 404. »

**31** It was first published in 1867, and then reprinted in slightly modified form in his famous study of the Renaissance that came out in 1873. It is the latter version, as re-edited in a modern reprint of the 1910 text of *The Renaissance*, that is cited here. On the text of Pater's *Renaissance*, see the introduction to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, ed. D. L. Hill, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1980. This section is a much revised and considerably extended version of an article 'Walter Pater's Winckelmann' published in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 46, 1993, pp. 67–73. »

**32** Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 210–11. My reading of Pater's 'Imaginary Portrait' of Winckelmann owes a lot to Richard Dellamora's *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill and London, 1990). Partly inspired by Dellamora's insistence on the ambivalences of Pater's projections of male desire, however, I interpret the essay on Winckelmann as offering an inherently more problematized view of the pagan sensuality of Greek art than he does (see his chapter 5, 'Arnold, Winckelmann and Pater'). Other studies of Pater I found helpful in coming to terms with him include J. Hillis Miller, 'Walter Pater: A partial Portrait', in H. Bloom (ed.), *Walter Pater* (New York, 1985), and W. Iser, *Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment* (Cambridge, 1987). »

**33** On this nostalgic reading of the epithet 'Et in Arcadia ego', see E. Panofsky, 'Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition', in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp. 340–1. »

**34** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 211. »

**35** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 209. »

**36** Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 211–12. »

**37** Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 209, 213. »

- 39** Pater (*Renaissance*, p. 188), quoting Madame de Staël. »
- 40** See H. Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution*, pp. 237 ff. »
- 41** C. Justi, *Winckelmann und seine Zeitgenossen*, first published in two volumes in 1866–72. »
- 42** See Chapter I, note 4. »
- 43** On the cult of Goethe in Victorian Britain, see Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800–1860* (Cambridge, 1980). »
- 44** Pater's identification with Winckelmann would have been the stronger because of the Socratic educative role (on the importance of this 'Platonic' paradigm for male same-sex relations, see Chapter VI, note 2.) the latter played out in relation to some of the younger men to whom he addressed his more homoerotically charged letters. On the sexual politics of Pater's milieu, see R. Dellamora, *Masculine Desire* (note 32). »
- 45** Dellamora, *Masculine Desire* (note 32), p. 18. »
- 46** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 189. »
- 47** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 191. »
- 48** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 210. »
- 49** [See Chapter V, note 65.](#) »
- 50** Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 183–4. »
- 51** Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 211–12. »
- 52** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 184. »
- 53** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 212. »
- 54** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 202. »
- 55** On the contradictory dynamic at work in the definition and new self-consciousness about homosexuality in the late nineteenth century, see Chapter IV, note 27. »
- 56** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 182. I am grateful to Caroline Arscott's comments for help in clarifying this analysis. »
- 57** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 205 (my underlining). The statue illustrated in [Plate 44](#) is a Roman copy based on a classic Greek prototype of about 440 BC. It was acquired by the British Museum in 1857. »

**61** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 209. »

**62** *Geschichte*, p. 151. »

**63** Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 208–9. »

**64** *Geschichte*, pp. 152–3. »

**65** Pater (*Renaissance*, p. 212) does indicate that there is some suggestion of this in Greek tragedy, and even in pastoral poetry. Like most historians and theorists of culture in the nineteenth century, following in the wake of Hegel (see also Chapter V, note 74), Pater envisaged Greek sculpture as the essence of the Greek ideal in its most purified form. »

**66** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 209. »

**67** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 209. »

**68** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 207. »

**69** Freud, 'The Economic Problem of Masochism' (1924), *Freud Library*, vol. 11, p. 414. This was a recurrent motif in Pater. Thus, in his imaginary portrait of a man who sought to find a measure of serenity in complete self-sufficient isolation, he wrote 'one's wisdom, therefore consists in hastening, so far as may be, the action of those forces which tend to the restoration of equilibrium, to the calm surface of the absolute, untroubled mind, to *tabula rasa*, by the extinction in one's self of all that is but the correlative to the finite illusion—by suppression of ourselves' (*Imaginary Portraits* (London, 1887), p. 123). »

**70** See, for example, the passage quoted earlier, note 57. »

**71** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 193. »

**72** W. Pater, 'The Age of Athletic Prizemen' (1894), in *Greek Studies: a series of essays* (London, 1899), p. 316. The Roman copy illustrated in [plates 45–6](#), that derives from the early classical so-called 'Sciarra' type (see M. Robertson, *A History of Greek Art* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 335 ff.), is one where the wound is particularly in evidence. The famous Dying Gaul in the Capitoline Museum is among the very few surviving 'Greek' male nudes displaying an obvious wound, and significantly it does not represent a hero or an athlete but a defeated barbarian. »

**73** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 202. »

**74** John Addington Symonds's much more explicit discussion of homosexual desire in Greek culture (*A Problem in Greek Ethics* (London, 1908)), written in 1873, could not

such as Pater is well described by Jonathan Dollimore's comment (*Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (London, 1991), p. 31) about how, in declaring 'either the absence of homosexuality *or* its (repressed) presence, plausible argument proceeds inseparably from questionable disavowal, inheriting the history of homosexuality's paradoxical, incoherent construction. Put another way, the disavowals are now as much a part of the history of homosexuality's actual absence as well of its presence, overt or repressed.' »

**75** For further discussion see Potts, 'Male Phantasy and Modern Sculpture', *Oxford Art Journal*, 15, no. 2, 1992, pp. 39, 44–5. »

**76** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 203. »

**77** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 204. »

**78** Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 204–5. »

**79** This essay was included with the one on Winckelmann in *Studies in the Renaissance*. See Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 79–81. »

**80** This quasi-modernist focus on the physical fabric of artistic representation, as distinct from a more traditional concern with the sensuous qualities associated with the motif being represented, involved conceptualizing a work of art so that it would both be true to and at the same time overcome the limits of its literal materiality. Such concerns first properly took shape in the later nineteenth century, and clearly separate Pater's analysis of Greek sculpture from Winckelmann's. On the specific problems these changes raised for sculptural aesthetics, see A. Potts, 'Male Phantasy' (note 75). »

**81** Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 218. »

**82** *Renaissance*, pp. 220–1. That this conclusion was left out of the second edition of 1877 would indicate that Pater was sensitive as to the controversial constructions that might be put on his aestheticism. But it is not at all clear that the problems had to do with any too overt suggestions of homoerotic desire. If this had been the case, the Winckelmann essay would probably have been the section to cut. For a fuller discussion, see Dellamora (note 32), chapter 8. »

**83** See earlier notes 44 and 74. »

**84** A slightly different perspective on Pater's conception of the Greek ideal in art is developed in my later article 'Walter Pater's unsettling of the Apollonian ideal in M.